

In As Much As You Did it To One of These:

Text: Matthew 25:40

This morning we are going to depart from the normal way of doing things. Instead of this being a sermon with an introduction, three main points, a conclusion and the whole works, I would like to share something with you. What I want to share is some of my experiences serving you since last December to now. To me these are unforgettable experiences and will long live in my mind.

Our Scripture this morning is an old and familiar one. It is the parable of the last judgement. Jesus spoke many times in parables because this type of teaching is generally more instructive than giving a lecture. Each parable tells a story and has a moral to it as well. This parable is no different in this respect. The moral is what people should be doing for other people. I have heard this story many times, and all those times it meant practically nothing to me.

Sad as this may seem it never quite got to me as it should have. I have often wondered just what it was trying to say. Oh, I knew that it meant we should help others, but then if we give our offering and it goes for benevolence doesn't this help other people? People who are hungry, naked, sick, imprisoned and so on. After all what more can we do? Then too isn't this what our ministers and preachers should be doing? This is the way I thought and perhaps this is the thinking of many of you here this morning. I sat in the church pew Sunday after Sunday and heard of those who were ill and shut in. But in all honesty I must admit that never once did I try to help them or comfort them unless they were personal friends or relatives. But one vivid example of my neglect caused me to take a closer look at myself and it has helped to change my outlook on this score.

A very good friend of mine was taken ill and placed in the hospital. He was a few weeks away from graduation from the Seminary and a young man of 29 or 30. I thought as did everyone else that his hospitalization would be a brief stay and soon he would be up and around. I wanted to write him a letter as it was rather difficult for me to go into Pittsburgh to see him, and I kept putting it off and putting it off. Well to make a long story short, Jim had a perforated intestine and after several weeks in the hospital he died. I still feel guilty every time I am reminded of my neglect. A small letter with just a few lines could have perhaps helped to cheer him up and it would have only required a few minutes of my

time.. But that moment is past and it will never return again. You have heard me state this fact several times and this is my very reason for it. Once we have  an opportunity slip by we have lost our chance to be of service in that particular case..

Since I have been here with you, I have had the privilege of visiting the sick and the shut ins of our two churches. And I have not made a mistake in the use of the word privilege. I consider it a wonderful privilege. Perhaps the following examples will serve to show just what I mean.. I want to share them with you this morning if I may. I will not mention names because I think that the people involved would not care to have their names mentioned for one thing. And for another the names are not that important.

One of the people I have visited is an elderly woman. This wonderful lady is always so warm and friendly. She makes each one of my visits seem so worthwhile.. When I read a scripture for her she listens so intently and I can tell that this really means something to her. Then there is a man who is bedridden and can no longer walk. He is hard of hearing, but he reads lips. He just lays in bed and smiles while you talk and he nods his head from time to time to let you know that he understands what you are saying. His wife does everything for him including lifting him in and out of bed. He cannot do much of anything for himself. I took Shirley with me on our first visit, and the lady was so grateful and thankful that we came that she hugged and kissed Shirley when we left. Then there is a spry little old lady whose days are long and lonely. The first time we visited her we didn't know whether we cheered her up or she cheered us up. I think that she cheered us up. She is truly a wonderful person. Another little old lady we <sup>HER DAYS TOO ARE LONG & HER NITES ARE EQUALLY LONG,</sup> have visited lives all alone.<sup>1</sup> We have visited her several times and each time she asks about the people at church.. How is so and so? Or do you know this person or have you met Mr & Mrs.. such and such. The last time we were there we chatted for about an hour and when we said we had to leave her reply was, "Oh, do you have to go?" I am really concerned about this little old lady, because she is getting feeble and she should have someone to stay with her and look after her. <sup>THEN THE ELDERLY LADY ALONE, WITTY, ETC.</sup> Then there is the elderly gentleman who is not a member of our churches, but who  is lying near death.. The first time I was there I could not understand what he was trying to say, and his nurse had to interpret for me.. On subsequent visits I can now understand him and he is so grateful for the visits. In fact he smiles

and his smile lights up his face. The last time I was there before I left I prayed with him, and I reached out my hand and took his hand and held it as I prayed. He gripped my hand so tightly and held on as though he did not want to let go. It was like a child holding my hand in complete trust and love. I think the man realizes that the end of life is but a matter of time, and it is as though he is reaching out to God with me and holding on to me for strength. Needless to say this moved me very deeply. As a matter of fact I don't believe that I have visited one person that has not had an effect on me of one kind or another. Each experience has been different and each experience has made me feel just a little richer, a little bit better for having been in the presence of these wonderful people.

Now all of this brings us right back to this parable of Jesus. Anything which we do for our fellow man we do for Jesus. Now if any of you think that this is not your duty as I once did, I feel I must disagree with you. Sure it's my job and part of what I should be doing. But you and I are our brother's keeper. It is our responsibility to help others. His help involves not only material goods and money but also us. A part of us that cannot be bought or given as material goods are given. Many of these people I have been talking about are living in houses which we pass on our way home from church. If we would just stop for a minute and say hello, perhaps we would gain more than the person we visited. Now I am not saying that we can go see everyone who is ill, or visit ~~anyone~~ anyone at all. There are circumstances which make it impossible for visits.

For instance someone who needs lots of rest would not be able to have many visitors. Then too I don't think it is wise for a lot of people to visit someone in the hospital. The immediate family should be the extent of visitors there. But for people who are confined to their homes because of a chronic sickness of some sort or merely because of old age, it is nice for people to show their concern for them. And the point to remember is that you ~~will~~ <sup>CAN</sup> never imagine how these visits are enjoyed by these people. Just the idea of thought that there is someone who cares uplifts the spirits of these people and boosts their morale. So you see this is only a simple thing visiting those who are sick, shut in, aged, lonely. But Jesus has given us many simple things to do. Most of his teachings were about doing simple things. But the hard truth of the matter is that most people are so concerned with trying to do great things, large things, that they overlook the simple things. You can see the reply of those who only looked at the great and large things in life, "Lord when did we see you hungry, or thirsty,

or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison and did not help you?" But by the very fact that they did not recognize Jesus in all of these incidents proves their concern for anything but what ~~it should be~~ <sup>THEIR CONCERN SHOULD HAVE BEEN</sup>.

There are two cases of two men who found the real truth of this parable. One of them was Francis of Assissi. He was born into a wealthy family. He had everything a man could want. Money, clothes, more of anything than he could possibly ever use. And yet he was unhappy. He felt that life was incomplete. Then one day when he was out riding he met a leper. The man was repulsive and ugly because of the disease and quite sickening to behold. Yet something compelled Francis to dismount, which he did and he threw his arms around the leper and while he held him thus the face of the leper changed to the face of Jesus. <sup>found</sup> He went on from there to ~~become~~ what today is known as the Franciscan monks. He gave up all he owned. In fact he gave away all that he had until his family disowned him and would not give him anymore, so that he had to beg for money and food and clothing to help those whom he wanted to help.

The second man was Martin of Tours. He was a Roman soldier and a Christian. On a cold winter day he was entering a city and a beggar stopped him and asked him for money. Martin had no money that he could give. He looked at the beggar and he appeared to be blue from the cold and he was shaking and shivering and he moved Martin so that he decided to do what he could. He took off his soldiers coat, which was worn and frayed, and he cut it in two and gave half to the beggar. That night he had a dream. In this dream he saw Jesus and the heavenly angels. Jesus was in the midst of all these angels, and Jesus was wearing half of a soldiers coat. One of the angels asked Him, "Master why are you wearing that battered old coat, who gave it to you?" The answer which Jesus gave was, "My servant Martin gave it to me." These two men followed this parable in their lives.

We may never become world renowned. Our names may not become well known as St. Francis. Yet we can attain the stature of these two men by willingly serving the needs of our fellowman. Jesus tells in the parable how the king welcomed those who had served their fellowman and how he rejected those who did not. We should not be thinking of religion as winning a prize or being rated above someone else, but Jesus tells us very plainly that those who live the Godly life and do the Christlike thing will be rewarded. Therefore if we wish to be included

St. John Emleton 11:00 4/21/68

\*processional Hymn 20  
\*Solemn Declaration  
\*Call to Worship Pg. 165  
Confession of Sin  
Assurance of Pardon  
Responsive Reading Sel. 56 Pg. 603  
Hymn 182  
Scripture Matthew 25: 31-46  
\*Gloria Patri  
\*Apostles Creed  
\*Pastoral Prayer & Response  
Anthem  
Announcements

BILL BROWN 7:17  
CHICKEN DINNER THURS.  
VISITORS ETC.  
SPRING MEET. NEXT SUN.  
MR. GRIFFIN

Offering, Prayer  
\*Hymn 253  
Sermon  
Prayer & Lord's Prayer  
\*Hymn 465  
\*Benediction  
\*Threefold Amen  
\*Postlude

Salem Lamartine 9:30 4/21/68

\*Processional Hymn 184  
\*Solemn Declaration  
\*Call to Worship Pg. 165  
\*Confession of Sin  
Assurance of Pardon  
Scripture Matthew 25: 31-46  
\*Gloria Patri  
\*Apostles Creed  
\*Pastoral Prayer  
Anthem  
Announcements

Bill Bowen tonite 7:30

SPRING MEETING CANCELLED  
CHICKEN DINNER THURS.  
VISITORS

Offering, Response, Prayer  
Hymn 65  
Sermon  
Prayer & Lord's Prayer  
\*Hymn 467  
Benediction  
\*Threefold Amen  
\*Postlude.